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SUBJECT: VISIT TO TURKEY OF UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS KAREN P. HUGHES.

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

1. SUMMARY: Your visit to Turkey comes at a time when bilateral relations are gradually but perceptibly improving. While the Turks highly value U.S. support for Turkey,s EU membership and our active work on behalf of a Cyprus settlement, the perceptions that we have done nothing to counter the PKK in northern Iraq remain irritants in the relationship. Turkey demonstrates that democracy and Islam are not incompatible, yet there are dangers in postulating that Turkey should be considered an example for other countries. The point of departure for our public diplomacy initiatives with pious and secular Turks alike is issues, interests, and values, rather than religion. During this listening tour, your demonstration of respect for the diverse perspectives you encounter will be greatly valued. END SUMMARY.

Shared Policy Goals, Yet Concerns on Iraq and PKK

2. The U.S.,s steadfast support for Turkey,s EU aspirations, and specifically our activism, even when behind the scenes, in promoting an October 3 starting date for EU accession negotiations is welcomed by Turkey. Long-standing, active U.S. support for a just settlement in Cyprus under the Annan Plan and our steps, including trade delegations and Congressional visits, to ease the isolation of northern Cyprus, is another area of convergence of U.S. and Turkish interests.

3. Iraq is a major preoccupation for Turks and it will lead the agenda of many of your interlocutors. Turkey and the U.S. now share common goals for Iraq: a secure, stable, democratic country that is united and territorially whole. Turkey has provided valuable assistance and cooperation in the global war on terrorism. The GOT offered to send peacekeeping troops to Iraq in October 2003 (an offer refused by Iraq), approved the use of Incirlik airbase for tankers to refuel aircraft on support missions for Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, authorized the transit of troops on rotation from Iraq, and permits the transit of fuel, coalition supplies, and humanitarian goods. This April, the GOT granted the U.S. permission to establish a cargo hub at Incirlik, which has significantly increased our efficiency in delivering supplies to Iraq.

4. However, our actions in Iraq have been highly unpopular with the Turkish public, 95 percent of which opposed the war. Many in government share the public,s perceptions. Concerns about our lack of action against terrorist PKK camps in northern Iraq, Kurdish desires for independence, the ethnic balance and future of Kirkuk, and perceived discrimination against Turkmen in northern Iraq fueled the public,s strong disagreement with U.S. efforts in Iraq. Last year, irresponsible statements by Turkish political leaders solidified negative public opinion, and anti-Americanism grew as a result of highly distorted media reporting on the Iraq war, against which the Mission pushed back hard in an effort to hold the press to a standard of fact.

5. A series of high-level exchanges, beginning with the President,s visit in June 2004, followed by Secretary,s Rice,s visit to Ankara in February, and continuing with the early June 2005 visits of Prime Minister Erdogan and Foreign Minister Gul to Washington and the Secretary,s meeting with FM Gul in New York this week on the margins of the UNGA, has contributed to a closer relationship and much improved atmospherics. The major irritant in the relationship remains the perception that the U.S., despite its global campaign against terrorism, is doing nothing to counteract the approximately 2000 PKK militia who take refuge in northern Iraq, providing them a base of operation for terrorist attacks in Turkey.

Turkey,s Many Faces

6. As you visit Ankara and Istanbul, it is important to

remember that there are, in fact, many Turkeys and that there is much more to the country than its capital and the world renowned city on the Bosphorus. Turkey is a relatively poor country, with an average per capita monthly income of just \$340. Approximately 30 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. Nineteen percent of Turkish women are illiterate. It is a young country, with more than 60 percent of its population under 30 years of age. And it is a highly complex country in terms of religious self-identity and the place of religion in society and government. Elite supporters of Turkey,s secular state downplay the role of religion, yet there exists a strong element of Islam in the social and cultural traditions of Anatolia, as well as within the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP).

Muslims and Democracy Do Not a Model Make

17. As the region,s only secular democratic Muslim nation with a majority Muslim population and a key U.S. ally, Turkey plays a critical role in the formulation of strategies to address the Muslim world. Turkey bridges Europe and Asia, both physically and culturally. It provides proof that democratic values can thrive in a predominantly Muslim nation.

18. Yet there is danger in this truth. Turks object vigorously to their country being referred to as a &model8 or &example8 for other nations of how Islam and democracy can co-exist. Part of their objection goes back to the founding of Turkey as a self-consciously secular state. Others object because, for most Turks, religion is an intensely private and personal issue. Still others interpret the use of &model8 or &example8 of an endorsement of the status quo, when, in fact, there remains much more to be done in protecting human rights and freedom of expression and promoting democratic reform. An even more dangerous trap is the use of the formulation &moderate Islam,8 which implies to many Turks that Islam is in the first instance violent and dangerous. If pushed to label our Turkish ally, we characterize it as a country with a democratic, secular government and a Muslim majority population.

Public Diplomacy in Turkey

19. Ninety-nine percent of Turkey,s population is Muslim, and in a very real sense every public diplomacy initiative we conduct in support the MPP constitutes outreach to Muslim audiences. Yet, our interaction with Turks takes as its starting point our shared goals and interests) or the differences that we seek to bridge) rather than the fact that Turkey is a predominantly Muslim country.

110. Turkey is set apart from other Muslim countries by Ataturk,s powerful and lasting vision of a secular state of Muslims. The continuing debate over the ban on women wearing headscarves in government buildings and universities is a constant reminder, if one were needed, that American concepts of freedom of religious expression cannot simply be overlaid onto Turkey.

111. The complexities associated with the role of religion in secular Turkey underscore the importance of adopting an approach to communicating with Muslim audiences based on the premise that there is no monolithic Islamic culture. What works in Riyadh may not play well in Cairo, and will almost certainly not work in Istanbul or Ankara. The Mission has made a concerted effort to reach out to AKP constituents, Islamist-oriented NGOs, and self-identified pious Turks. At the same time, we continue to closely engage the country,s traditional Kemalist power structure. Turkey,s population is younger and faster growing than that of any other European country and we need to extend our efforts to more successfully engage the country,s youth. In a word, our outreach is directed at Turks.

112. Due to strong opposition to the Iraq War, public support for U.S. foreign policy has, on the other hand, eroded dramatically in Turkey, not unlike in many countries around the world. With Iraq on its doorstep, Turks are deeply concerned about the continuing violence there and the country,s uncertain political future. The PKK is an issue of fundamental importance for the Turks. The opposition the U.S. encounters in Turkey is far less related to religious faith than it is a question of policy and geography. There remains, on the other hand, on the part of many secular and pious Turks alike, an admiration for American values, freedoms, and technology and a desire to study in, visit, and do business with the United States.

113. We applaud your emphasis on listening during this visit. The fact that you are visiting Turkey following stops in two Middle Eastern countries may leave some Turks to conclude that the U.S. views Turkey as part of the Middle East. It is important that during your discussions you reaffirm our view that Turkey is firmly rooted in Europe and the West. The

civil society and religious leaders and the youth and women with whom you meet will have no shortage of opinions and views to share. They will value the respect you demonstrate for their perspectives. Despite the differences of opinion your interlocutors will voice with our policies, they will find that we share a common belief in the importance of democracy, liberty and family.

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